C. REMARKS

This Reply is in response to the Office Action mailed on November 22, 2004 in which claims 58-63, 69-73, 108-113 and 118-121 were rejected. With this Reply, claims 58, 69 and 108 are amended, and claim 121 is canceled without prejudice. Claims 58-63, 69-73, 108-113 and 118-120 are presented by the Applicants for reconsideration and allowance.

Applicants thank Examiner Graham for the telephonic interview with Mr. O'Brien, Applicant's attorney, regarding the present Office Action.

1. OBJECTION TO CLAIM 69

Page 2 of the Office Action objected to claim 69 for containing an apparent typo. With this Response, Applicants amend claim 69 to correct the typo. Specifically, the word "covering" has been replaced with the word --converging--.

2. REJECTION OF CLAIMS 58-61, 108-111 AND 118 UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) AS BEING UNPATENTABLE OVER FILICE ET AL. IN VIEW OF CHEN

Page 2 of the Office Action rejected claims 58-61, 108-111 and 118 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Filice et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,592,158) in view of Chen (U.S. Patent No. 6,485,382). Claims 58 and 108 are independent claims, and claims 59-61 and claims 109-111 depend from independent claims 58 and 108, respectively. Independent claims 58 and 108 are currently amended to more clearly set forth the invention and is now believed to be patentably distinguishable over the cited prior art.

Independent claim 58, as amended, recites a method for constructing an elongate bat having a longitudinal axis. The method includes forming an elongate tubular striking member having a circular cross section with a proximal end, a distal end, a striking region therebetween, and a juncture section adjacent the proximal end, and swaging at least a portion of the juncture section to converge toward the axis on progressing toward the proximal end to form a mouth of a first diameter. The method also includes forming an elongate one-

piece handle member of composite material having a circular cross section having a proximal end, a distal end and a juncture section adjacent the distal end which diverges from the axis on progressing toward the distal end to a second diameter greater than the first diameter. The method also includes assembling the striking member and handle member by inserting the handle member into the striking member with at least a portion of the outer surface of the juncture section of the handle member engaging a portion of the inner surface of the juncture section of the striking member, with the remaining portions of the handle member extending longitudinally from the proximal end of the striking member. The method further includes joining the juncture section of the handle member to the juncture section of the striking member to provide a rigid interconnection between the striking member and the handle member.

Independent claim 108, as amended, recites a method for constructing an elongate bat having a longitudinal axis. The method includes forming an elongate tubular striking member having a proximal end, a distal end, a striking region therebetween, and a first juncture section adjacent the proximal end of the striking member converging toward the axis on progressing toward the proximal end, the proximal end having a first inner diameter. The method also includes forming an elongate one-piece handle member of composite material having a first length, a proximal end, a distal end and a second juncture section adjacent the distal end of the handle member. The handle member diverges from the axis on progressing toward the distal end to a second outer diameter that is greater than the first inner diameter. The second juncture section has a second length that is less than thirty percent of the first length. The method further includes assembling the striking member and the handle member by inserting the handle member into the striking member with the outer surface of the second juncture section of the handle member being overlapped by the inner surface of the first juncture section of the striking member. Also, the method includes joining the striking member to the handle member, such that at least a first portion of the first juncture section

directly contacts at least a first portion of the second juncture section, to provide a rigid interconnection between the striking member and the handle member.

It is respectfully submitted that neither Filice et al. nor Chen, alone or in combination, teach, suggest or disclose the combination of elements and limitations of independent claim 58, as amended, or independent claim 108, as amended. In particular, regarding claim 58, neither Filice et al. nor Chen, alone or in combination, teach a method of constructing a bat including the steps of: forming an elongate tubular striking member having a juncture section wherein at least a portion of the juncture section is swaged; forming an elongate one-piece handle member having its own juncture section; assembling the striking and handle members such that at least a portion of the juncture section of the handle member engages a portion of the juncture section of the striking member; and rigidly interconnecting the handle member to the striking member.

In regard to claim 108, neither Filice et al. nor Chen, alone or in combination, teach a method of constructing a bat including the steps of: forming an elongate tubular striking member, forming an elongate one-piece handle member of composite material, and assembling the striking member and the handle member by inserting the handle member into the striking member with the outer surface of the second juncture section of the handle member being overlapped by the inner surface of the first juncture section of the striking member, such that at least a first portion of the first juncture section directly contacts at least a first portion of the second juncture section, to provide a rigid interconnection between the striking member and the handle member.

In contrast, Filice et al. discloses a shock attenuating ball bat having a handle and a barrel, which is configured to reduce the shock or sting transferred to a user's hands upon impact with a ball. Filice et al. seeks to accomplish this shock attenuation though the use of an elastomeric isolation union, which is specifically placed between the handle and the barrel to prevent contact between the handle and the barrel and to isolate the handle from the

barrel. Preferably, the elastomeric isolation union is approximately 0.125 inch thick. The elastomeric isolation union prevents complete striking energy transfer from the handle to the barrel and vice versa. Filice et al. is directed toward and specifically teaches no contact or engagement between the handle and barrel. Thus, Filice et al. teaches away from the direct contact, engagement and rigid interconnection of the handle member and the striking member.

Figure 2 of Filice et al. also does not show direct contact between the barrel and handle. In particular, Filice et al. employes the elastomeric isolation union 36 and the transition 26 to isolate and separate the barrel from the handle. Col. 6, lines 17-24 further describe the use of the isolation union 36 and the transition 26 as a one piece elastomeric structure that is configured to separate the barrel from the handle.

In further contrast to the requirements of claims 58 and 108, Chen discloses a bat having a composite portion, a ring and a far portion. The composite portion includes a distal end having an interlocking joining means, which mechanically interlocks with the ring. In the first embodiment, the interlocking joining means is through bores on the distal end of the composite portion. In the second embodiment, the interlocking joining means includes a plurality of annular contours for receiving the ring. Adhesion of the resin to surfaces of the ring mechanically joins the composite portion to the ring. In both embodiments, neither the far portion or the ring overlap the handle portion.

The ring is a tapered, truncated conical shell, which is made of a metal, such as aluminum alloy. The distal portion of the ring is adapted for attachment to the far portion, such as through welding, pinning, etc. The bat of Chen does not include a one-piece handle member and a one-piece striking member wherein at least a portion of a one-piece handle directly engages or contacts at least a portion of a striking member. Rather, Chen discloses the introduction of an additional structure, the ring, formed of a metal, which is mechanically interlocked with the composite portion and the far portion. The ring serves as either a second piece of the handle member, or it serves as a separate component of the bat, which separates

and isolates the handle member from the striking member and prevents direct contact, and substantially complete striking energy transfer between, the handle and striking members.

Chen is devoid of any teaching, disclosure or motivation suggesting the swaging of at least a portion of the juncture section of the striking member as required by claim 58, as amended. Chen also does not teach, suggest or disclose the overlapping of a juncture section of the handle member by a juncture section of the striking member, as required by claim 108.

Neither Filice et al. nor Chen teach, disclose or suggest the methods of claims 58 or 108, as amended. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that amended claim 58 and claim 108 each overcome the rejection based upon Filice et al. in view of Chen, and are believed to be in condition for allowance. It is also respectfully submitted that claims 59-61 and 109-111 and 108, which depend from amended claim 58 and claim 108, respectively, are patentable over Filice et al. and/or Chen for at least the same reasons.

3. *REJECTION OF CLAIMS 62, 63, 69-73, 112 AND 113 UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) AS BEING UNPATENTABLE OVER FILICE ET AL. IN VIEW OF CHEN AND FEENEY '655*

Page 2 of the Office Action rejected claims 62, 63, 69-73, 112 and 113 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Filice et al. in view of Chen and Feeney '655 (U.S. Pat. No. 6,056,655). Claims 62 and 63 are dependent claims, which depend from independent claim 58, as amended. Claim 69 is an independent claim and claims 70-73 depend from claim 69. Claims 112 and 113 are dependent claims, which depend from independent claim 108. Independent claims 58, 69 and 108 are currently amended to more clearly set forth the invention and are now believed to be patentably distinguishable over the cited prior art, including Filice et al., Chen and Feeney '655.

Independent claim 69, as amended, recites a method for constructing an elongate bat having a longitudinal axis. The method includes forming an elongate one-piece tubular striking member having at least one circular cross section with a proximal end, a distal end, a striking region therebetween, and a first juncture section adjacent the proximal end.

The first juncture section converges toward the axis toward the proximal end of the striking member. The tubular striking member is formed without a weld extending along one of the circular cross sections. The method also includes forming an elongate one-piece handle member of composite material having a circular cross section having a proximal end, a distal end and a second juncture section adjacent the distal end. The second juncture section diverges from the axis toward the distal end of the handle member. The step of forming the handle member includes positioning plural composite layers adjacent each other to form a tubular member and curing the layers. The method also includes assembling the striking member and handle member with at least a portion of the outer surface of the juncture section of the handle member engaging a portion of the inner surface of the juncture section of the striking member, and joining the juncture section of the handle member to the juncture section of the striking member to provide a rigid interconnection therebetween.

It is respectfully submitted that Filice et al., Chen and Feeney '655, alone or in combination, do not teach, suggest or disclose the combination of elements and limitations of independent claim 69, as amended. In particular, Filice et al., Chen and Feeney '655, alone or in combination, do not teach a method of constructing a bat including the steps of: forming an elongate one-piece tubular striking member having a juncture section; forming an elongate one-piece handle member having its own juncture section and being formed without a weld extending along a circular cross section of the striking member; assembling the striking and handle members such that at least a portion of the juncture section of the handle member engages a portion of the juncture section of the striking member; and rigidly interconnecting the handle member to the striking member.

In contrast to the requirements of claims 58, 69 and 108, Feeney '655 teaches a composite bat having a frame with an integral handle area and hitting area, wherein an annular recess is formed into a portion of the hitting area for receiving an annular insert. Feeney '655 does not teach, suggest or disclose a method of constructing a ball bat with separate one-piece handle and striking members wherein the one-piece striking member has a proximal end that

converges toward a longitudinal axis of the bat toward the proximal end of the striking member. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claims 62, 63, claims 70-73, and claims 112 and 113, which depend from independent claims 58, 69 and 108, respectively, are patentable over Filice et al. in view of Chen and Feeney'655 for at least the reasons stated above relating to independent claims 58, 69 and 108.

4. *REJECTION OF CLAIMS 119 AND 120 UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) AS BEING UNPATENTABLE OVER FILICE ET AL. IN VIEW OF CHEN AND LANCTOT*

Page 2 of the Office Action rejected claims 119 and 120 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Filice et al. in view of Chen and Lanctot (U.S. Patent No. 5,380,003). Claims 119 and 120 are dependent claims, which depend from independent claim 108.

It is respectfully submitted that Filice et al., Chen and Lanctot, either alone or in combination, do not teach, suggest or disclose the combination of elements and limitations of independent claim 108. Lanctot discloses a baseball bat having a one-piece integral frame with a handle configured to receive a tubular insert. Lanctot does not teach, suggest or disclose a method of constructing a bat with a one-piece handle member and a separate one-piece striking member, and rigidly connecting the handle and striking members such that at least a portion of the handle and striking members contact each other.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claims 119 and 120, which depend from independent claim 108, are patentable over Filice et al. in view of Chen and Lanctot for at least the reasons stated above relating to independent claim 108

5. *REJECTION OF CLAIMS 121 AND 135 UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) AS BEING UNPATENTABLE OVER FILICE ET AL. IN VIEW OF CHEN AND EGGIMAN '398*

Page 3 of the Office Action rejected claim 121 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Filice et al. in view of Chen and Eggiman '398. With this Reply, claim 121 is canceled without prejudice.

6. CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of claims 58-63, 69-73, 108-113 and 118-120 for the reasons stated above. Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.112 is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned to discuss any issues in this case in order to advance the prosecution thereof.

Respectfully submitted,

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By _____

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